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ABSTRACT

A study investigated the following: the types of freshman English courses for non-majors offered at Taiwan universities in 1995 and the attitudes of faculty, students, and graduates concerning the language skills emphasized; placement of students in classes; use of standardized teaching materials; and need for summer courses. In spring 1996, 178 freshman English teachers, 198 content area teachers, 382 university graduates, and 1,086 university freshmen were surveyed. Eighteen English Programs for Non-English Majors coordinators from 17 Taiwan universities were interviewed. Results indicate that the majority of teachers and graduates wanted reading skills to be emphasized, but freshmen and content teachers preferred listening and speaking skills. In the majority of programs, focus was on reading skills. Most respondents also favored placing students according to proficiency level, but only three programs matched this expectation. In addition, most respondents desired summer courses, but these were offered in only nine programs. However, most disapproved of standardized instructional materials, and this sentiment was matched by 15 programs. Findings point to the need for further curricular adjustment in the programs. (MSE)

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Freshman English Programs for Non-English Majors at Universities in Taiwan: An Investigation into the Gap Between Expectations and Reality

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Abstract

In 1993 the Ministry of Education in Taiwan mandated a policy that changed Freshman English for Non-English Majors (FENM) from a required course to one of the foreign language courses university freshmen could take to fulfill the foreign language requirement. Students were also allowed to take an advanced English course to replace FENM. Therefore, all the English Programs for Non-English Majors (EPNM) were forced to revise their curricula to ensure that they were attractive enough to compete with other foreign language programs. Therefore, it is important to investigate whether the FENM programs implemented were meeting the needs of students. This study was designed to find out what kinds of FENM programs were implemented in the academic year of 1995 and what kinds of FENM programs were desired by program coordinators, EPNM teachers, and students. Four aspects of the FENM program were examined: the language skills emphasized, the placement of students in classes, the use of standardized teaching materials, and the need for summer courses. In the spring of 1996, 178 EPNM teachers, 198 content teachers, 382 university graduates, and 1086 university freshmen responded to FENM needs assessment questionnaires. Eighteen EPNM coordinators from 17 universities in Taiwan were interviewed about their FENM programs. The findings showed that the majority of the EPNM teachers and graduates wanted reading skills to be emphasized, but freshmen and content teachers preferred listening and speaking skills. In the majority of the programs, reading skills were focused on. The majority of the subjects also favored placing students according to proficiency level, but only three programs matched this expectation. In addition, the majority of the subjects desired summer FENM courses, but these courses were offered in only nine programs. However, most of the subjects disapproved of standardized teaching materials, and this sentiment was matched by 15 programs. The findings of this study pointed to the need for further curricular adjustments in the FENM programs in Taiwan.

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Introduction

The English Programs for Non-English Majors (EPNMs) at universities have always been a concern for many EFL researchers and teachers in Taiwan and the government has also been revising its policy about it so that it would meet the country's needs. A 1993 mandate from the Ministry of Education (MOE) stipulated that the Freshman English for Non-English Majors (FENM) course would no longer be a required course but one of the foreign language courses freshmen could take to fulfill their foreign language requirement. According to this mandate, students with high proficiency in English proficiency (as determined by individual universities) or an interest in another foreign language should be allowed to take advanced English or another foreign language to replace FENM. The FENM credits were also reduced from eight to six. However, universities were given leeway in their implementation of the mandate in order to match their individual situations.

The shockwave sent by the 1993 mandate made the EPNMs reassess their FENM programs. Since FENM had to compete with other foreign languages, the EPNMs have to offer FENM courses which are attractive enough to interest students. Therefore, issues such as what language skills should be emphasized to meet students' needs, whether students should be placed in classes according to their proficiency level to facilitate teaching, and whether teachers should be allowed to select their own teaching materials to match their individual teaching styles and their students' interests and needs have become worthy of investigation. Since at every university there are always students who fail their FENM courses and who do not have the opportunity to take FENM during regular semesters for some reason (e.g., a conflict in schedule), the need to offer summer FENM courses to allow these students to graduate in time has also become an issue that should be dealt with.

Ideally, the FENM programs implemented should match the desires of the people who are involved in these programs, such as EPNM teachers and freshmen. However, a gap may exist between what is wanted and what is implemented. The first step toward closing the gap is to understand the nature of the gap. Therefore, EPNM teachers and freshmen should be surveyed about their opinions about their programs. However, because freshmen may be too young to be insightful about what they need, another group of students who were students some time ago should also be surveyed: recent university graduates. This group of subjects may be mature enough to reflect on the English programs they had before and provide valuable ideas about what kinds of programs would have been useful for them. In addition, content teachers, i.e., teachers teaching subjects other than English (such as engineering, math), should be involved too, since they often require their students to read English-language textbooks, which creates the need for skills in reading English materials.

The research questions for this study are as follows:

1. What language skills do university freshmen, university graduates, EPNM teachers, and content teachers think the FENM course should emphasize? What language skills are actually emphasized?

2. What are the attitudes of the previously mentioned subjects toward placing freshmen in FENM classes according to proficiency level? How many EPNMs place students in this way?

3. What are the attitudes of the previously mentioned subjects toward the use of standardized teaching materials for FENM classes? How many EPNMs use these materials?

4. What are the attitudes of the previously mentioned subjects toward offering summer FENM classes? How many EPNMs offer these classes?

It is hoped that this study will provide university administrators and teachers with insights into ways of improving Taiwan's FENM programs. It is also hoped that policy makers at the MOE will use findings from this study to help them assess their curricular policies.

Review of the Literature

Some studies have been conducted about the EPNM programs at universities in Taiwan, with a view of providing useful information for improving these programs. Some of these studies were descriptions of programs implemented at universities, and others were needs assessment studies that attempted to examine the nature of the programs desired by people involved in these programs, such as students, EPNM teachers, and content teachers.

Some studies have touched on the issue of which language skills among the four (listening, speaking, reading, writing) are emphasized in FENM courses. Lin (1994) reported that Chengchi University decided to focus on reading skills in 1991. According to Chang (1987), science students at Fujen University received training that emphasized speaking, reading, and writing. Kuo et al. (1990) noted that all four skills were emphasized at Chiaotung University. Chang (1995) mentioned in her literature review that most of the FENM courses at universities emphasized reading. Some needs assessment studies have investigated what skills are desired for FENM. Chang (1995, May), Chern (1993), Kuo et al. (1990), Shieh and Wu (1988), and Yang (1985, 1992) found out that freshmen wanted to develop their speaking and listening skills more than the other skills. However, Kuo et al. (1990) showed that teachers teaching subjects other than English hoped that reading and writing training would be the focus instead. On the other hand, English teachers tend to want to integrate the four language skills, as reported by Chern (1993), Haakenson (1992), and Lin (1987). Apparently students and teachers have different expectations about the focus of FENM.

Some studies have also touched on the issue of how students are placed in FENM classes. Chang (1987) reported that in the College of Foreign Languages and College of Science and Engineering at Fujen University freshmen were placed in writing and reading classes according to their English JCEE (Joint College Entrance Exam) scores and in conversation classes according to a listening comprehension test. Kuo et al. (1990) also reported that in the past there had been some attempts to separate the strongest and weakest students from other students and place them in special classes at Chiaotung University. However, due to some problems, this was discontinued. In 1990, all students were grouped by the departments they came from, irrespective of their proficiency level. However, English teachers at this university believed that weaker students should be placed in enhancement classes to receive remedial training. Haakenson et al. (1992) also indicated that a placement test was used to group freshmen into three levels at Tunghai University in 1992. In her literature review, Chang (1995) reported that Chungyuan University and Chengchi University used the English JCEE or a test designed by the programs to place freshmen. She also mentioned the class grouping methods used by other universities, i.e., by the departments students came from or the courses they chose. (e.g.,

Tsinghua University). In addition, she revealed that, in response to the 1993 mandate, Chungcheng University began to group freshmen into three levels according to the results of the JCEE in the first semester and according to a placement exam in the second. However, in 1994 this practice was discontinued and the students from the same departments were put into the same classes. Chang's survey also showed that 66.3% of the freshmen at Chungcheng believed that freshmen should be grouped according to proficiency.

A few studies have investigated whether or not standardized FENM teaching materials are used in FENM programs. Chang (1987) indicated that the College of Foreign Languages and College of Science and Engineering at Fujen University allowed teachers to chose their own teaching materials. Kuo et al. (1990) reported the same policy at Chiaotung University. According to Lin et al. (1996), Chengchi University started allowing teachers free choice in instructional materials in 1992. However, Haakenson et al. (1992) reported that Tunghai University required their teachers to use a standardized syllabus and textbooks for students of each of the three proficiency levels.

Summer courses have been offered by some universities to serve students who do not have the opportunities to take FENM courses during regular semesters and students who fail their FENM courses and have to retake them in the summer in order to graduate in time. However, so far, there has not been any study about whether these courses are considered as desirable or whether some universities do offer them.

All the studies mentioned above targeted only one single university and, as far as the researcher knows, hardly any island-wide study has been conducted to address the issues raised in this study to give a comprehensive picture of the FENM programs in Taiwan. In addition, even though one of the studies reviewed above did involve as many as three groups of subjects, i.e., English teachers, content teachers, and students, none of them have involved university graduates. Graduates, whose work experiences could provide insights about what kinds of language programs could produce the kinds of language skills needed in the work place, should be a valuable source of information. Research which involves a wider spectrum of populations is needed to give a rounded picture of the kinds of FENM programs desired.

Methods

This study is part of a larger study conducted by the researcher and Dr. Meei-ling Liaw to find out what kinds of EPNMs were implemented in the 1995 academic year in Taiwan and whether these programs met the expectations of university freshmen, university graduates, EPNM teachers, and content teachers. There were 20 universities in Taiwan in 1995, and within each there were one or two EPNMs. In this larger study, the researchers surveyed only 17 universities and excluded three teachers' universities because the purpose of the research was to investigate universities which served a general purpose. Teachers' universities, which aim specifically to train teachers, might have a different focus for their FENM and therefore were excluded. At these 17 universities, there were 18 EPNMs. In this report, each of these 18 programs is referred to by the name of the particular university where it was offered. These programs were Soochow (Soochow University), Fujen (A) (Fujen Catholic University, the College of Liberal and Fine Arts), Fujen (F+S) (Fujen Catholic University, the Colleges of Foreign Languages, Natural Sciences, Life Science, and Engineering), Taiwan U. (Taiwan University), Chinese Culture (Chinese Culture University), Chengchi (Chengchi University),

Tamkang (Tamkang University), Central U. (Central University), Chungyuan (Chungyuan Christian University), Tsinghua (Tsinghua University), Chiaotung (Chiaotung University), Tunghai (Tunghai University), Chungcheng (Chungcheng University), Providence (Providence University), Fengchia (Fengchia University), Chunghsing (Chunghsing University), Chengkung (Chengkung University), and NSYSU (Sun Yat-Sen University). In most of these EPNMs, FENM courses were the major part of the curricula, with some advanced English and ESP courses offered on the side.

In order to understand what kinds of FENM courses were offered in 1995, the EPNM coordinators were interviewed and also asked to send in their program descriptions. The interviews were conducted on the phone or in person in the spring and summer of 1996, and the conversations were tape-recorded. To ensure that the researcher had presented the data accurately, the first draft of the Results and Discussion section of this report was sent to the 18 coordinators for confirmation. Based on the coordinators' feedback, the draft was revised. This method, called insider checking, was recommended by Bogdan and Biklen (1982) and Hammersley and Atkinson (1983).

The data about the views of university freshmen, university graduates, EPNM teachers, and content teachers about what kinds of FENM were needed came from a large-scale needs assessment survey conducted by the researcher and Dr. Meei-ling Liaw in 1995, as mentioned previously. In the larger study, four questionnaires were respectively designed for university freshmen, university graduates, EPNM teachers, and content teachers. University graduates who graduated from universities not more than three years ago were chosen to ensure that their FENM experiences were not too outdated to be relevant to the programs implemented in 1995.

The coordinators and some teachers in the 18 EPNMs surveyed helped the researchers distribute and collect freshman and EPNM teacher questionnaires. In total, 1252 copies of freshmen questionnaire were sent out and 1086 were returned, with a return rate of 86.7%. Four hundred and sixteen copies of the EPNM teacher questionnaire were sent out and 178 of them returned, achieving a return rate of 42.7%. Three thousand and two hundred copies of the graduate questionnaire were sent out by mail and 382 copies returned, with a return rate of 12.3%. Nine hundred copies of the content teacher questionnaire were sent out, and 198 returned, i.e., 22%. The statistical software used to analyze the data was SPSS PC+.

The questionnaires used in the needs assessment survey of this study used a scale of four instead of five, i.e., without a middle point for subjects who did not have either a positive or negative attitude towards an issue. This was done in order to prevent subjects from resorting to checking the middle point when they were too lazy to figure out their attitudes. However, the researcher was aware that the lack of a middle point might have caused a problem for subjects who actually took a neutral stand on a certain issue. The reader of this report should take this into consideration when interpreting findings.

Results and Discussion

In the following, the views of the university freshmen, university graduates, EPNM teachers, and content teachers towards FENM programs will be contrasted with the programs which were actually implemented in the 1995 academic year.

Language Skills Emphasized in FENM

The subjects' ideas about what language skills should be emphasized in FENM are shown in Tables 1-4.

Table 1: Attitudes Towards an Emphasis on Listening Skills in FENM
Statement: I think Freshman English should emphasize training in listening proficiency.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Freshmen	43.1%	50.4%	5.4%	1.0%
Graduates	23.6%	29.0%	31.0%	16.4%
EPNM teachers	57.8%	32.4%	7.5%	2.3%
Content teachers	54.2%	38.4%	6.2%	1.1%

Table 2: Attitudes Towards an Emphasis on Speaking Skills in FENM
Statement: I think Freshman English should emphasize training in speaking proficiency.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Freshmen	48.2%	46.6%	4.4%	0.8%
Graduates	24.2%	29.4%	29.9%	16.5%
EPNM teachers	49.1%	37.6%	11.6%	1.7%
Content teachers	53.4%	39.8%	5.7%	1.1%

Table 3: Attitudes Towards an Emphasis on Reading Skills in FENM
Statement: I think Freshman English should emphasize training in reading proficiency.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Freshmen	14.9%	57.2%	25.4%	2.5%
Graduates	38.4%	30.1%	20.0%	11.5%
EPNM teachers	69.4%	24.9%	5.2%	0.6%
Content teachers	54.8%	35.0%	9.0%	1.1%

Table 4: Attitudes Towards an Emphasis on Writing Skills in FENM
Statement: I think Freshman English should emphasize training in writing proficiency.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Freshmen	12.2%	50.9%	33.0%	4.0%
Graduates	17.9%	29.4%	35.4%	17.3%
EPNM teachers	36.4%	40.5%	19.7%	3.5%
Content teachers	43.5%	47.5%	7.9%	1.1%

Tables 1-4 show that the percentages of freshmen who strongly believed or believed that listening, speaking, reading, or writing skills were important were 93.5%, 94.8%, 72.1%, and 63.1%, respectively. This indicated that freshmen considered listening and speaking skills to be more important than reading skills, which was in turn more important than writing skills. For the graduates, the percentages were 52.6%, 53.6%, 68.5%, 47.3%, suggesting that for them reading skills seemed to be more important than listening and speaking, and writing skills were the least important. However, for EPNM teachers, the percentages were 90.2%, 86.7%, 94.3%, and 76.9%. For them, reading skills were the most important, followed by listening, and then speaking, and then writing skills. As to content teachers, the percentages were 92.6%, 93.2%, 89.8%, and 91%. For them, the most important skills appeared to be speaking, listening, writing, and reading, in descending order. In general, for the four groups, training in

writing was least desired. Teachers might have preferred to work on reading skills because reading for information is often required on many jobs which require the use of English, and being able to read newspapers or magazines for information or pleasure is more important than being able to listen or speak in a country where people usually do not use English in their daily interaction. Another reason may be that the emphasis on reading has always been a tradition in Taiwan's high school and university foreign language education (Yang, 1985). Even though some of the 18 FENM programs surveyed in this study were gradually breaking away from this, it took time for things to change. University graduates might have wanted to develop reading skills for the same reasons teachers believed that students needed these skills. Freshmen could have preferred training in listening and speaking because they were tired of the heavy emphasis on reading and writing (mainly grammar exercise) in high school English classes and wanted more interactive activities such as listening and speaking. Content teachers seemed to see speaking, and listening as more important. This was a surprising finding because students were rarely required to listen to or speak English in content classes. These teachers' attitudes were probably a reaction against many students' inability to communicate orally with foreigners even after a few years' learning of English. The above results in general corroborates findings from Chang (1995, May), Chern (1993), Kuo et al. (1990), Shieh and Wu (1988), and Yang (1985, 1992), which showed that freshmen had a stronger interest in listening and speaking. However, it contradicts Kuo et al. (1990), who claimed that EFNM teachers believed that their freshmen needed listening and speaking skills more than other skills.

As to what language skills were actually emphasized in FENM, the 18 programs differed. They could be classified into the following five types according to the language skill(s) they focused on:

1. A focus on reading: 10 programs

Ten programs emphasized reading: Soochow, Chinese Culture, Chengchi, Tamkang, Tsinghua, Chungcheng, Fengchia, Central U., Chunghsing, and NSYSU. However, some programs had additional goals besides developing reading skills. The coordinator of Tamkang said that his program also tried to help students develop an appreciation for other cultures, critical thinking ability, and an interest in learning English.

2. A focus on all four skills: 4 programs

Four programs emphasized all four skills: Chungyuan, Chiaotung, Tunghai, and Providence. The program at Providence stressed the four language skills required for academic studies. At Chungyuan, besides the four language skills, learning strategies were also stressed. Tunghai attempted to develop all language skills, even though it leaned toward reading slightly.

3. A focus on reading and writing: 2 programs

Two programs focused on both reading and writing. They were Fujen (A) and Taiwan U..

4. A focus on reading and conversation: 1 program

Only one program, Fujen (F+S), had reading and conversation as its emphasis. However, within this program, each college had a different focus. The college of Foreign Languages stressed conversation, the College of Natural Sciences reading and conversation, and the College of Life Science reading.

5. A focus which varied by course: 1 program

In one program, Chengkung, the emphasis of FENM varied by course.

The above shows that a large majority of the programs emphasized reading skills. This might have been an influence of the past tradition. According to the policy set by the MOE in 1961, the goal of foreign language teaching at universities was to develop students' ability to read textbooks written in foreign languages. According to the observation of Chang (1992), the majority of the FENM programs still focused on reading around 1992. This tradition lingered on, even though some programs had begun to devote more time to listening and speaking skills. A second reason for such a focus may be that the large sizes of most FENM classes made it very difficult to teach speaking and writing. A third reason could be that in most programs FENM teachers with a literature background outnumbered those with other backgrounds such as TEFL or linguistics, as reported by Huang (1997) in her study of FENM teachers' specializations (literature background: 44.9%; Language teaching background: 23.1%; linguistics: 18.1%; others: 13.9% at 16 universities in Taiwan), and teachers with a literature background tended to prefer offering FENM courses that focused on reading skills (Chang, 1995, May). In programs that offered a variety of courses for students to choose from, such as Chungcheng and Central U., on the surface, students seemed to have many choices, but in reality they did not, since they wanted training in listening and speaking but had to choose among courses that emphasized reading mostly. Conflict of a similar nature also existed in programs that offered only one type of FENM course that aimed to develop general language skills. The fourth reason may be the inadequacy of audio-visual facilities in some programs, which made it hard to teach listening and speaking.

Since reading skills were the focus at the majority of the universities, the programs implemented in 1995 apparently reflected what the EPNM teachers and university graduates wanted best. It was ironical that these programs, which were offered for freshmen, matched freshmen's desire least. The researcher suspects that in the future, the match may become better, since there will be more teachers with a language teaching background in the programs, who tend to be more willing to offer courses focused on listening and speaking.

Placement of Students in FENM Classes

The subjects' attitudes towards placing FENM students according to the level of their language skills are indicated below. (Content teachers were not asked to indicate their attitudes toward this issue.)

Table 5: Attitudes Towards Placing FENM Students According to Proficiency Level
Statement: I think it is a good idea to place students in different Freshman English classes based on their proficiency level.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Freshmen	22.3%	39.3%	25.6%	12.6%
Graduates	39.7%	40.2%	14.5%	5.0%
EPNM teachers	57.3%	29.4%	11.2%	2.1%

Table 5 shows that respectively 61.6%, 79.9%, and 86.7% of the freshmen, graduates, and EPNM teachers believed that students should be placed according to their proficiency. This finding was supported by Chang (1995, May), who showed that 66.3% of the freshmen at Chungcheng University wanted to be placed according to their proficiency. In the current

study, among the three groups, EPNM teachers appeared to be most supportive of this idea, perhaps sensing that having students of the same level would make their teaching easier. However, freshmen were less supportive, probably because some of them were apprehensive of the possibility of being stigmatized as low-level students.

The programs implemented in 1995 could be divided into three types according to the way they placed FENM students.

1. Placing students according to the departments they came from: 7 programs

Seven programs put students from the same departments in the same classes. These programs were Chinese Culture, Chengchi, Tamkang, Chungyuan, Providence, Fengchia, and Chunghsing. The coordinator of Chungyuan believed that such grouping made it easier for teachers to integrate ESP into the curriculum, since students from the same department usually shared the same academic interest. The coordinator of Fujen (A) said that such a placement method made it easier for students from the same class to find time to work together outside of class since they tended to have the same class schedule.

2. Placing students according to their choices of courses or teachers: 7 programs

Seven programs grouped students according to their choices of courses or teachers. These programs were Soochow, Taiwan U., Central U., Chiaotung, Chungcheng, Chengkung, and NSYSU. For example, Chungcheng offered 11 FENM courses and students were grouped by their choices. At Soochow, students were allowed to choose the teachers they wanted (even though all the FENM courses shared the same focus: general language training) and therefore were grouped by the choice of teachers.

3. Placing students according to departments in the first semester and choices of courses in the second: 1 program

Tsinghua was the only program that placed students according to their majors in the first semester, and according to their choices of courses in the second. In the first semester all students took the same kind of FENM course that focused on general language training and grouping students by their departments made administrative work easier. In the second semester, various special-topic courses were offered and students were thus grouped by choices of courses.

4. Placing students according to proficiency level: 3 programs

Three programs placed students according to proficiency level. In Fujen (F·S), freshmen were put in reading and writing classes according to English JCEE scores and in conversation classes according to the results of a listening test. At Tunghai University, students were placed according to the results of a test on reading and listening designed by the program. In Fujen (A), the placement was mainly based on the English JCEE scores, but the departments the students came from also played a role to a certain extent. For example, the Mass Communication Department had three sections, and students from these three sections were pooled together and then divided into four or more sections based on their JCEE scores. However, smaller departments such as Applied Psychology and Library and Information Science had to be combined and then divided into three sections. In addition, the placement of overseas students and those who entered the university without taking the JCEE was based on the result of a test designed by the program.

At least four programs, Tamkang, Central U., Chiaotung, and Chungcheng, used to place students according to their English JCEE scores, but they discontinued this practice for various reasons. For example, Central U. discontinued it because the program found that good students not necessarily wanted to go to classes classified as advanced classes. In addition, teachers in the program did not trust JCEE scores as a reliable criterion for placement. In the past, Chiaotung tried to place students according to both the result of a placement test and JCEE scores in the second semester. According to this policy, students classified as high level were allowed to take advanced English. Later, it was found that most students would rather stay in their original classes than be placed in advanced classes, and teachers in the program felt that grouping by proficiency level was a waste of energy. Fengchia also stopped placing students according to their English ability. The coordinator said that such a practice was useless because after placement there still were students with various levels of proficiency in each class.

Chungyuan was the only university in 1995 that had an Intensive English Program for students who scored less than 20 in the English JCEE. Two class hours were added each week to help them catch up with regular students. Taiwan U. used to have a reinforcement class for overseas students whose English was too poor to compete with local students. However, this was discontinued for some reason.

In summary, close to half of the programs (44%, 8 out of 18) placed students into FENM classes according to the departments students came from, and the same number of programs did it according to students' choices of courses. Only 17% of the programs (3 out of 18) grouped students based on the results of some exam. Some programs might have been discouraged from grouping students in this way by the logistic inconvenience entailed. In addition, the way students were grouped was also restricted by the nature of the FENM courses offered. Those that offered a variety of language-skill and special-topic courses tended to group students by their choices of courses, and those that offered one type of FENM which focused on general language skills were more likely to group students according to either the departments students came from or their proficiency.

Since only three programs placed students according to proficiency, there was a grave mismatch between what most programs did and what teachers and students wanted. This was a problem that was not easy to solve. In programs which offered a variety of courses for students to choose from, students were automatically grouped by their choices of courses, and it would be very expensive to divide each course into more than one sections according to proficiency level. In programs in which only one type of FENM course was offered and grouping by proficiency was possible, the great amount of logistic work entailed might discourage coordinators from adopting such a placement method.

The Use of Standardized FENM Teaching Materials

Table 6 shows the subjects' views on the use of standardized materials for FENM classes. (Content teachers were not asked to indicate their attitudes toward this issue.)

Table 6: Attitudes Towards the Use of Standardized FENM Teaching Materials

Statement: I think the Freshman English program should use standardized teaching materials.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Freshmen	4.8%	14.9%	57.4%	20.8%
Graduates	5.5%	17.2%	48.5%	28.8%
EPNM teachers	5.4%	18.1%	38.6%	38.0%

A large majority of these three groups, i.e., 78.2%, 77.3%, and 76.6% of freshmen, graduates, and EFNM teachers, respectively, either strongly disagreed or disagreed that standardized teaching materials should be used. There did not seem to be much difference among the three groups. Teachers could have wanted to choose their own materials to match their personal interests as well as their students' interests, skill level, and needs in the study of their major subjects. Freshmen and graduates probably preferred non-standardized materials so that their own needs could be considered.

The programs implemented in 1995 could be classified into two kinds according to whether FENM teachers were allowed to choose their own teaching materials.

1. Programs which allowed teachers to choose their own teaching materials

Fifteen programs fell into this category: Soochow, Fujen (A), Fujen (F+S), Taiwan U., Chinese Culture, Chengchi, Central U., Chungyuan, Tsinghua, Chiaotung, Chungcheng, Providence, Chunghsing, Chengkung, and NSYSU. Teachers seemed to greatly appreciate this freedom, according to several coordinators.

2. Programs which used standardized teaching materials

Three universities required their teachers to use textbooks stipulated by the programs. At Tamkang, a book collaboratively written by teachers in the 1994 academic year was used. At Tunghai, a commercially-produced book was chosen for students of each of three proficiency levels. At Fengchia, one commercially-produced book was chosen for all students.

As shown above, an overwhelming majority (83%, 15 out of 18) of the programs allowed their teachers to determine their own teaching materials. This was an indication that teachers were gaining autonomy. In the past, many programs hired teachers who had never had any training in language teaching (because there were not enough trained teachers available). It was then perhaps necessary for coordinators to make many pedagogical decisions, such as the choice of textbooks, for these teachers. However, by 1995 with the growing number of TEFL-trained teachers in the programs, most coordinators might have felt that there was no longer any need to tell teachers what to do. In addition, by 1995, with the influx of high-quality imported TEFL textbooks, there were many choices for teachers. Also, allowing teachers to choose their own teaching materials could be a way to avoid the conflict that might have arisen if each teacher had wanted a different book. In the past, a few programs, such as Chengchi, Taiwan U., and Chinese Culture, did use standardized teaching materials but later decided to allow teachers free choice, perhaps for the reasons mentioned above. Some programs, such as Chengchi, opted to give teachers recommendations about textbooks rather than stipulating what to use.

What was implemented in most programs appeared to match the three groups' attitudes reasonably well. This may be a good sign suggesting that the programs were considered satisfactory by the teachers and students. In addition, when teachers and students are given freedom in the choice of instructional materials, they might be motivated to perform better.

The Need for Summer FENM Courses

Summer FENM classes were sometimes offered to students who failed FENM or missed the opportunity to take it during regular semesters. Table 7 shows the subjects' attitudes toward summer FENM courses. (Content teachers were not asked to indicate their attitudes

toward this issue.)

Table 7: Attitudes Towards Summer FENM Classes
Statement: Students who fail Freshman English should take a remedial English course in summer, instead of retaking it during the regular semester.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Freshmen	19.1%	43.4%	30.3%	7.5%
Graduates	19.7%	45.0%	25.0%	10.3%
EPNM teachers	23.4%	38.3%	34.1%	4.2%

Table 7 shows that 62..5%, 64.7%, and 61.7% of the freshmen, graduates, and EPNM teachers either strongly believed or believed that it was better to retake FENM in the summer than in regular semesters. However, still slightly more than one third of subjects from each of the three groups did not feel so. In general, the three groups' attitudes did not differ much.

An examination of the programs in 1995 showed that only nine programs offered summer courses: Soochow, Chinese Culture, Chengchi, Tamkang, Chungyuan, Tsinghua, Tunghai, Providence, and Chengkung. Even though two programs, Taiwan U. and Chiaotung, had the policy of offering them on condition that there was sufficient enrollment, there were no such classes offered in the academic year of 1995, due to insufficient enrollment. The 18 programs could be classified into three types according to the types of students their summer courses served:

1. Students who failed FENM: 3 programs
Three programs offered summer courses mainly for students who failed the FENM course: Chinese Culture, Chungyuan, and Tunghai. Chinese Culture offered two sessions of summer FENM: one for those who failed the first semester and one for those who failed the second.

2. Students who were not able to take FENM during regular semesters: 2 programs
Two programs intended their summer courses mainly for students who missed the chance to take FENM during the regular semesters: Tamkang and Chengchi.

3. Students who failed FENM or were not able to take FENM during regular semesters: 3 programs
Three programs offered summer courses for both students who failed FENM and students who for some reasons missed it during regular semesters: Tsinghua, Providence, and Chengkung.

4. Students who failed FENM, or were not able to take it during regular semesters, or had special learning needs: 1 program
Soochow was the only program whose summer classes admitted students with special needs, besides those who failed FENM and those who missed it. Students could take the first-semester FENM in the morning and the second-semester FENM in the afternoon. Soochow appeared to be a good example of a program making adjustments to give special assistance to students with particular learning problems. It was unfortunate that other programs were not able to make the same provision.

As discussed above, half of the programs offered summer FENM classes in 1995. These

summer classes had several advantages, which included allowing more of the students' energy to be concentrated on the work required in the study of major subjects, greater flexibility in students' arrangement of course work, and an additional channel to expedite the students' fulfillment of course requirement. Unfortunately, half of the programs failed to offer these courses. Some might have failed to do so because the enrollment was usually small and small classes inevitably meant high costs. Fujen (A) and Chiaotung were two examples. Other programs might have not offered them because there were not enough teachers willing to teach in the summer.

Since only 9 programs offered summer classes, the match between what the programs offered and what teachers and students expected seemed less than ideal. It was unfortunate that financial and personnel problems should compromise the quality of FENM programs.

Conclusions and Implications

Since this study involved as many as 17 universities, it should provide a comprehensive view of the kinds of FENM program implemented in Taiwan in the 1995 academic year. The four populations engaged in the survey should also give a rounded picture of the expectations of the people involved in these programs. It is hoped that the findings from this study will not only inform the EPNMs about their curricular problems but also help the MOE assess its policies about foreign language education.

Conclusions

The majority of the 18 programs (10 out of 18) emphasized reading skills. This matched poorly with the desire of freshmen and content teachers, who considered speaking and listening as their top two priorities, with reading being only the third or fourth. However, the emphasis on reading appeared to match very well what graduates and EPNM teachers believed to be important for freshmen.

Close to half of the 18 programs (44%) placed students into FENM classes according to the departments students came from, and the same percentage of programs did it according to students' choices of courses. Only three programs (17%) grouped students based on the scores of some proficiency exam. Even though there were advantages in placing students according to proficiency level, some programs might have refrained from grouping students by language skill level to avoid the heavy logistic work involved, and others might not have been able to do so because they offered a variety of FENM courses for students to choose from, and therefore the grouping was determined mainly by choices of courses. This did not match what freshmen, graduates, or EPNM teachers desired very well, since most of them believed in the value of placing students according to language competence. This mismatch may not be an easy problem to solve.

A large majority (83%) of the 18 programs allowed teachers to choose their own instructional materials. Most programs seemed to believe in the benefit of allowing teacher autonomy in teaching. An obvious benefit might be the greater ease in the integration of teachers' and students' interests or needs, which may result in better performance on the part of both teachers and students. Most programs' policies about instructional materials appeared to match nicely with the expectations of most freshmen, graduates, and EPNM teachers, who favored free choice in instructional materials.

Only nine out of the 18 EPNMs offered summer FENM classes for students who had failed FENM, or missed the opportunities to take them during regular semesters, or had special learning difficulties. However, close to two thirds of the freshmen, graduates, and EPNM teachers believed that it was better to retake FENM in the summer, rather than in regular semesters. There seemed to be a mismatch between what teachers, graduates, and freshmen desired and what was implemented. Financial concerns and the lack of teachers for summer classes were the major factors of this problem.

Implications for Teaching and Policy Making

This study shows that there was a mismatch between the language skill emphasized in most programs (i.e., reading) and the language skills wanted by freshmen (i.e., speaking and listening). As suggested by Chern (1993), students' needs should be considered seriously since whether or not they feel their needs are met affects the success of classes. Teachers may adopt reading as the core of the course, but integrate it with activities for listening and speaking, so that there is enough variety in activities to make the classes lively and engaging. Teachers perhaps should also avoid activities that have been heavily used in high school, such as out-of-context grammar drills, translation, written tests aimed mainly to test language correctness, so that students do not get bored.

Since few programs placed freshmen according to proficiency level and there were reasons which made it hard for the programs to do so, teachers should be ready to deal with problems arising from having students of a wide range of proficiency level in one class. Special care may be needed in the design of instructional materials and activities. Provisions may have to be made for students with special learning difficulties.

With the majority of FENM teachers given a free hand in the choice of their teaching materials, it has now become more possible for these teachers to match their materials with not only their own interests but also the interests and needs of their students. Teachers could also experiment with innovative teaching materials and learn new things from them. However, this also means that teachers are taking on greater responsibilities for the success of their teaching materials. Therefore, the continuation of teacher development is very important. Programs should encourage teachers to collaborate among themselves by sharing their teaching resources and helping one another with the choice and use of teaching materials. The government and universities should also provide funds for teachers who wish to improve their performance or develop additional expertise by attending workshops or gaining new degrees.

Programs which have not offered summer FENM classes should be encouraged to offer them. If the number of students who want to enroll in a summer course at a certain university is too small, another university within the same city could be involved so that the two universities could pool their students together. Logistical and financial complications will have to be ironed out so that students will benefit from these courses.

Research Implications

A few research implications can be drawn from this study. This study shows that the need to offer foreign languages other than English has been recognized. Research should be conducted to find out what languages are being offered now and how much demand there is for each of the languages. Also, since most of the FENM classes have students with mixed ability levels, it will be interesting to find out what kinds of teaching methods or materials will be

effective for these classes. In addition, with more and more programs allowing their teachers freedom in the choice of instructional materials, there is a need to find out what materials are favored by teachers and why they are effective. Furthermore, very little research has been conducted on the learning of repeaters of FENM courses, some of whom are enrolled in summer remedial classes. A look into how they are coping in these summer classes will be insightful. Additionally, since the 1993 mandate, the EPNMs have been in constant transition. Regular studies about these programs should be conducted so that program coordinators and teachers will know what kinds of programs are around, in order to learn from them, and the MOE will have feedback on what kinds of programs have been implemented in order to assess its curricular policies. It is hoped that more investigations into the EPNMs in Taiwan will be conducted in the future. In this way, the EPNMs will have a better chance of meeting the needs of students in Taiwan.

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